


fencezine



volume3 issue1

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10 or 11 years of fence...

2006 marks 10 or 11 years of fence releases from acoustic lo-fi fife songsmithery to chicago political prose over beats to japanese crazy pop ... on cassette, cdr, cd and vinyl, in handmade spray painted wallets, varnished wooden boxes and plastic cases. i'd struggle a little to name all the collective members in 2006 without paper and a pen, but they all choose to stay, move on or come back without our interfering too much. they own their music. fence is not so much of a label, as a ... um ... 10 or 11 year old ... um ...

it would have been a far simpler tidier story had fence started on a particular date with a particular release by a particular "signing", but given the way we've worked our label this past decade or so, any reader of the fencezine will know that fence has followed few standard business practices, and none of them simple nor tidy. to understand the underlying values and motives of fence, you need only experience life as a busker, a band leader, a music industry cynic, a failure, a duffer, a hard worker, an eternal pessimist, an aquarian ... a what?

okay. busking teaches you this: very few people admit to liking music just by the way it sounds, very few people want to pay for it when they do, yet much fun can still be had and money can be made once you realise it's all in the entertainment value. being a band leader teaches you this: no matter what you do, you can't make everyone happy, and no matter how hard you push, there's something bigger and more powerful pushing in the other direction, and it's sometimes yourself. being a music industry cynic teaches you this: it's unfair that the lowest paid people in the chain are often the most talented - just not talented at making money. being a failure teaches you this: you can only go up, and that success starts from within and is measured by your own values. being a duffer teaches you this: an empathy with other duffers, and that to succeed the whole time is too dull and not funny enough. being a hard worker teaches you this: you've obviously not found the thing you enjoy, 'cos if you had, it wouldn't be work, and it wouldn't be hard. being an eternal pessimist teaches you this: everything you wish for might happen, so be careful what you wish for. being an aquarian teaches you this: accept your selfish, flirtatious and depressive nature, then go write it all down in song.

my busking adventures are too long winded and probably more interesting than this fence story, and the story of the skuobhie dubh orchestra would be better told by 5 or 6 different voices, but the demise of a band is the true catalyst for fence and all that came after.

in 1994 what was to be the 3rd album by the sdo became the 1st album by new band khartoum heroes. the original band split, and at the tail end of 1994 i had the fanciful idea that i would one day release my own music on my own label, and that the label would be fence. there'd be no business hassles,

no music industry paranoias, no disintegrating bands, no fallouts and arguments over track lists and artwork. in 1995, while still a part of khartoum heroes, i bought a four track tape recorder and began my solo king creosote project. this was, with hindsight, my salvation really - i was fast becoming very disillusioned with everything to do with music, from the people involved not only in bands, but in all the "supporting" jobs like management, agencies, record labels, press offices ...

to experience the freedom in just coming home from work, gigs, rehearsals or the pub and recording anything and everything no matter the hour, the quality, or the motive ... well, this was the perfect antidote to a band jail sentence. this was fun.

in 1995 i went to see about a start up loan for new businesses at the granary in cupar. i was laughed out of the office when i outlined my plan for my own music on my own record label that took no financial risks, made no concerted push to be heard, but operated on simple faith that good music would eventually find its own audience. i left with a very definite "f**k you all, i'll do this myself" attitude, and no cash.

in summer 1995, khartoum heroes had to make a decision. play the music game again, or disband. the mutinous sdo faction returned to the earlier busking values - to play for cash anywhere from the street up, save cash to buy recording equipment or studio time, and not pander to the whims of a horrible and unfair music industry. we decided to start again, basically, as a 4 piece playing bluegrass and original songs, and to rely on skill rather than amps and effects.

we had an album of out-takes from a previous incarnation of the sdo called "armistice" gathering dust, and so although the first recording to carry the fence imprint was an 11 track cassette, the cassette had a secret track, making it a dirty, dirty dozen. the new band skulking about under the "shoe market hour" monicker was fast improving, and it more than deserved a recording of its own as "skuobhie dubh orchestra".

at the start of 1996, the reformed sdo went into the studio to record "a new cat". it was the best thing the sdo ever recorded. over the course of the year the band dispersed. nobody's fault really - i became very tired and quite ill with the effort that everything seemed to be taking these days, and the players found more interesting homes elsewhere. i moved in with the lonepigeon, listened to his own four track recordings, munched seroxat, and schemed. i began playing ceilidh music, joined a funk band, and began having a laugh again. i saved some cash too. i became more king creosote in my music than kenny anderson, so it wasn't all doom and gloom, and i took to debauchery.

i did a lot of thinking in 1997, a lot of soul searching, and bounced my ideas off friends. some thought that to sit in fife, play and record music, then wait

for an audience to find me would never work. some, like mc quake, were quietly optimistic, and that fence would steadily find its own fans. i've always listened to quake.

the change in fortune came about when stu ross and i played at a highland festival somewhere off the A9. we met someone from belgium whose opening line was "you need to drink more" pointing at me, "and you need to cheer up" pointing at stuart. he then claimed to be able to heal by reading auras. he nailed my character, and he nailed stuart's character, but more importantly he touched my forehead and said "success begins in here". i thought a lot about that once we'd quit laughing. i also thought a lot about all the problems he detected in my left side which incidentally helped me to quit laughing, although i don't drink as much as maybe i should.

i realised a few things all at once. i'd shed a load of old skins this past year, and although i'd always tried to succeed at music, a lot of the drive was a reaction to forces from outside. i'd had parental pressure to get a real job for years, and i'd had increasing peer pressure in the "look how much we're all earning now" type talk each year i'd run into old school pals at the lammas market. i'd tried to keep a band happy, a record label happy, an agency happy, an audience happy ... over the second half of 1996 i realised i could make myself happy by playing and recording music my own selfish way, not feel too guilty in the process, and even looked back at my failed band history without any regrets. i'd somehow converted a load of little failures into one whopping success - i'd learned just how not to go about things!

i bought one of the 1st generation digital 8 tracks in 1997 and a cdr recorder in 1998. fence at last had a way to go forward - one album at a time, burned from a dat master, with homemade sleeves that took as much time to type as the music took to cook, the whole process costing more than could be made from selling the end result. now i had a mortgage, the whole process again costing more than could be made from selling the end result - well, let's just say i had a bit of an incentive to work too.

the first cdrs made by fence were of "a new cat", and i sold 2 copies to fans of the sdo after "bobby dazzler" played in our new live home of aikman's bar and bistro in st andrews. unfortunately i hadn't read the instructions properly and had to bring the cdr recorder up to aikman's the following week to "finalise" the 2 albums i'd sold but which wouldn't play. then followed solo albums by king creosote, lonepigeon and pip dylan. they only sold at the end of term after weeks of playing live in aikman's every other wednesday night. in 1998 i'd begun working part time in a local st andrews record shop, and in 1999 the st andrews citizens were using this same shop to make a racket and play scalextrix. together with the late billy pilgrim, fence had taken over the shop lease in spring 2000. we stocked fence cdrs, but more importantly we attracted a certain type of slacker ... when gummi bako walked thru' the door of the fence shop, a collective had all but blundered into existence.

From Washboard to Beatbox: MC Quake Climbs the Fence

Can you believe it's been ten years of Fence already?! I know, I know - crazy, isn't it? But as mind-blowing and surreal as that is - I can actually stretch my memories of several key Fencers back to a time well before the King had been crowned, before the Aviator died, and before the Dylan had been Pipped. For I was once one of the few, the proud, the demented - a member of the Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra!

"What does that have to do with Fence's 10th Anniversary?" you may ask. Well, it has EVERYTHING to do with it, so shut up and let me get on with it.

Back to the story. I was privileged to play washboard in one of the incarnations of the Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra - an experience unlike any other in my then-20-year-old life. I met Kenny and Een at the Westport Bar in Dundee, and soon after nicked Een's soup spoons and got serious about mangling the washboard. Rounding out the rhythm section on snare drum w/ brushes (back then, Een was mostly playing the upright bass, with an embryonic clawhammer banjo style emerging on a few tunes) was the man who would later become Captain Geeko the Dead Aviator. Together, the four of us honed our foot-stomping, four-part harmony "speedgrass" style of music, and took it out on the road (prepping ourselves with practice runs on the mean streets of St. Andrews and Dundee). In France, we hooked up with Eric, the French 5-Finger Banjo Picking Sensation, and began our conquest of centre villes all across Europe.

Kenny encouraged me to keep a journal of our travels, convincing me that later - say, fifteen years or so - I'd appreciate being able to look back and relive in some detail our adventures. He was right, so I (somewhat) diligently tried to write it all down. In fact, it would have been a perfect reference for this piece; I could have dipped into it, regaling you, the reader, with anecdote after hilarious anecdote (like the time we let this cocky American fiddle player sit in with us for a few days, whom we nicknamed "Brad Major"; or the funny story about getting extremely drunk in some French town, accepting an invitation to kip on the floor of some guy's flat, only to have him break the key off in the lock, forcing us to sleep in the park across the street; or the arse that was Bruxelles and simultaneously having to kick Een's then-girlfriend / traveling companion out of the van and back to Scotland AND have more of our home-recorded cassettes duplicated...). Sadly, in the course of over ten moves since those heady busking days, I seem to have misplaced said journal (of course, it'll turn up when it's too late - but that's par for the course for someone like me, who's no Stranger to Disappointment).

Anyway, long story short it was an incredible summer filled with an endless string of fun, frivolity, music and laughter... and driving... and beer... and several instances - while in Holland - of major weed smoking (of which I confess to be the corruptor and instigator - *mmmm, skunk bud!*). Afterward, I returned home to my mundane life here in the U.S.; staying in touch with Kenny (even then beginning the transformation into

King Creosote) through the medium of cassette tape. I'd record long, 90-minute rambles of any subject that came to mind - it was way easier than trying to write everything down, and I could pack in much more information. Ever the innovator, Kenny began to mine these cassette letters for samples that later showed up in various tunes, including the Halloween-bashing diatribe "Witch Hat" on Fence's very first release, the Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra's *A New Cat*. Which you should now have in your own grubby little paws.

Later on I would begin to contribute my own original music in the form of picket fences and collaborations, of which you may or may not already be familiar. But MC Quake began his Fence career as a talking head looped into SDO and King Creosote songs. Good thing I've never been shy about sounding like an idiot! *

* See 'Props for Fence' on last year's FZ3, The Fall of the Third Keich, for more of my thoughts on the evolution of Fence

>>FENCEZINE LOYALTY SCHEME<<

as promised, here is the all-new and exciting loyalty scheme as run by your favourite record label fence. you should have noticed a piece of paper in the middle of your fencezine - this is your first loyalty card - except it's made of paper! old lining paper to be exact. we've even stuck a few loyalty points on there to get you started, and for being loyal enough to have bought the fencezine in the first place.

you can earn loyalty points in a few different ways. for every £10 you spend on fence records, you'll receive a single loyalty point. we might even hand a few out at live shows, and we might even offer loyalty points in competitions. in fact, we'll probably use them as bribes ... once you receive your points; stick them on the loyalty card.

so what?! well, we'll start a loyalty section on the fence website, and in there you'll find music etc. that we'll swap for the required amount of loyalty points, and we'll even add an exclusive title or two. what you'll do is send your loyalty card with the correct number of points on it to the po box, quote your loyalty card number, and we'll send you your loyalty "prize". maybe mark your order form or e-mail order with "i'm a loyal fencer" or something.

now, we'll no doubt have a few rules and regulations too. you know, no part exchanges, no cash back, that sort of thing. a loyalty point will be worth approximately £1, so what you're really being offered here is a 10% discount of sorts, but less dull. i mean, look at how we've constructed the card and the points themselves!! the stickers will change depending on what the points are for etc., not that we think you'll cheat and buy up all of woolworths coloured stickers, but basically because we're limited to what the anstruther post office has in stock. 1 sticker, 1 point.

(we based this idea on the old loyalty scheme that came with action man and the stars you'd cut out of the packaging. i doubt we'll have a guard dog for 12 stars, but you never know with us lol!!)

start collecting!

A wee doad ae shite oan Fence...

What does Fence mean to me, eh? Hmmm...

Well, a lot is written and spoken about Fence these days and good thing too. However, to me Fence is basically all about Kenny 'KC' Anderson. OK, not ALL about him (I love you collective cats too!), but he started it for his own music and it's kinda continued from there. I've known him for years, and he's never changed... yes, he has changed his clothes but not his outlook. The music's mutated and been modified but the core remains the same. Whether it be 'Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra', 'Khartoum Heroes' (that's when I was first involved), 'Shoe Market Hour', 'The Citizens' or 'King Creosote'; the beardy man with the tunes has been strumming away. The humour, the sadness, the strange chord sequences and time signatures are all there. The line-up of collaborators differs from year to year, but the concept's the same. Dunno what the concept is, but it's the same. Maybe it's just good, honest songs? Maybe it's lots of laughter and stupid puns? Maybe it's drinking tea and ranting about how shite life is? Maybe it's saying 'Oh Ya Wee Beauty' until it becomes 'Oschyaweebijoutae'? Maybe it's about meeting girls? Traveling? It's most definitely about music and making stuff.

I was aware of the Dubhs originally having been brought up in Kingsbarns, near St Andrews, and then doing music myself in Edinburgh. I was interested in checking other bands, especially stuff on my own doorstep (the reason why I'm now on the radio). In this case, it was that hotbed of Rock'n'Roll - the East Neuk of Fife! I didn't get a chance to see them live until some gig at the Subway in Edinburgh. They were good. They were fast. They were playing bluegrass with banjo and wobble-board in it. I didn't know too much about this kind of stuff, but I liked it. Then my band 'Miraclehead' (with James Yorkston on bass, fact-fans!) played the illustrious Cupar Festival in 1991 (or was it 1992?) on the same bill as these raggle-taggle, folkie, mentalists! The chat was good, the jokes were rubbish and friendships were solidified!

My band split up soon after the Festival and strangely enough, so did Kenny's... hmmm, let's join forces and see what happens... It was christened 'Khartoum Heroes' - although the last Dubhs LP was also under that name, it was this line-up that really were the KH's. It sounded like a bizarre concoction of Indie, Bluegrass, Ska, Folk, Punk and big, shiny Pop tunes. The Banjo and the wobble-board stayed! I spent just over a year with that band and what a riot it was... I only have good memories. Amongst it all, we played Hogmanay in George Square in front of 10,000 people; we toured around some of Europe and played in squat-clubs in Holland; we recorded an LP and wrote some incredibly odd, but occasionally arresting tunes; we took lots of magic mushrooms and played a lot of Super Mario Kart; we ate ginger-bread and slept in sleeping bags in Kenny's cottage in Ceres; we played a lot of music together; we wore stupid hats, laughed a lot and made tonnes of friends. An unforgettable time!

Kenny's mentioned to me that 'Khartoum Heroes' was the true beginning of Fence, or possibly when he created it in his head... Maybe it was the collision of styles and of minds? It was like we all realized that chasing a dream and trying to be pop-stars was a waste of time, and making stuff was the important thing. Since then, I've been in different bands - some with James, and mostly all with Reuben. All the while, Kenny renamed and restructured his groups until finally settling on the solo route of 'King Creosote' - probably something he should have done years before, although he probably doesn't regret a single thing. Not content in solely making his own music and putting out his own records, he then started releasing LP's for his brothers Een and Gordon, and then his mates. The crazy fool has even released an LP of my songs! So the 'Collective' was born and has grown into a strapping young lad - or dilapidated old lady, if you prefer! The story of Fence (so far) is the story of doing what you do for the love of doing it. The fun of making music. It's not about the record-industry bollocks; it's about the real stuff. It's also about persistence and independence. Most importantly though, it's about strumming guitars, growing beards and talking shite with your pals.

KC and the Fence Collective, one and all - I salute you!

Oschyaweebijoutaes.

VG (Deaf Mutes 2006)

Jane B, The Lone Pigeon, and Me

It was Jane Birkin that first did it for me... I mean the criminally underrated King Creosote pop classic, as opposed to the somewhat overrated Anglo-French chanteuse.

I first got to know the St Andrews Citizens when I was working at Aikman's Bar-Bistro back in the winter of 1999. Not only did they make a nice break from execrable student indie bands, but they also had songs like Jane B, and would do things like hand out little toys to members of the audience, and end up with the entire bar playing along as part of the band. Having spent my teenage years on a London indie circuit that still worshipped the guy from Menswear as a kind of demigod, there was something so wonderfully inclusive and unsnobbish in their performances that I was instantly hooked. I also dug that two of the guys from the Citizens ran the only decent record store in town (that would be Fence Records on South Street), and didn't seem to mind me hanging out listening to Sonic Youth records for five hours at a stretch without actually buying anything. So I started scheduling my shifts at the bar around Citizens nights, as well as King Creosote solo shows that would usually feature sets from The José and / or the immortal Gummi Bako.



A few months later something very important happened. I was behind the bar, KC was playing, and he introduced a small, bearded man who walked with stooped shoulders, and his eyes cast down on the floor. So this uncomfortable looking guy gets up and starts playing, in fits and starts, a long, fairly monotonous, song about Moses. He stops playing. He starts again. He apologises to the audience. He begins the entire song again. The audience loses interest and goes back to their conversations. But then, for the briefest moment, he's in the zone - and delivers one verse with the most beautiful intensity I had ever seen. Then the moment is gone and he stops playing altogether, apologises to the audience, and shuffles off. I don't think anyone else noticed that magic moment, they had lost interest in this strange guy who couldn't finish his own songs, but I was deeply affected. Somehow that faltering performance combined the grace of a newborn deer learning to walk, with the grace of a stag that has just been shot as it staggers before it dies. I went up to the little bearded guy as we were clearing up the bar and said that I liked his show. He said he was the Lone Pigeon and he became one of my closest friends. That year was a tough one for both Gordon and me, he suffered with his health and I lost some friends. We helped each other a lot.

Before I left St Andrews, I wanted to get a couple of my songs recorded. So I asked Kenny to help me out. He set me up in a room with John and Gourlay from The José, and using an eight track, two mics, and his phenomenal talent, somehow made my songs sound alright. I had never really recorded anything before, and didn't quite realise how much of a favour I was asking of people in spending a load of time on my stuff (but then, I've always been a bit of a chancer). Kenny was truly amazing in the time and care he took over my songs; it was such a generous and cool thing for a genius songwriter to do - thank you King Creosote! The other really cool thing he did with my songs was to release them. I still remember holding Let's Get This Ship On The Road for the first time and thinking what a privilege it was to be part of something so genuine, open, and full of talented people.

So now, a fair few years later, and I'm writing this drunk after a practice with The Aliens, Gordon Anderson's new band, who I've just started playing guitar for. Somehow there's a nice circularity to that. Over the past few years I've tried to explain Fence to a lot of people. Not everyone has got it; even close friends and band mates have totally misunderstood what Fence is. It's not for everyone, but the people who get it really get it. I see great things for Fence, it's a wonderful, beautiful, and wild thing - let's keep it that way.

Love to all of you. js

the gospel according to gummi bako

If you've ever lived in St Andrews you'll know how difficult it is to leave. It's not that the "city" has everything you could possibly desire (although it is rather nice), it's just that it's more of a microcosmic bubble-world that prevents you from leaving lest you actually do something more interesting with your life. Maybe it's only natural that given the right ingredients, with the right conditions and the right kind of stimulation, things can quite easily simmer away nicely. Who knows? Anyway, having bummed around in St A's for a good few years I guess it was inevitable that I would eventually stumble into the amorphous entity that would become the Fence that we know and love. Ahem... ok here goes.

When I was in my freshers' year back in the early 90's, on the way back from the Students' Union, a friend and I snuck into a Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra gig in the Younger Hall. I was too drunk to remember much about the ceilidh apart from the fact that, beards or no beards, the SDO looked like a bunch of not-awfi-bonny wifies. A few beers, tears and years later...

... in the late 90's Aikman's Bar in Bell Street seemed to be the place where all the like-minded layabouts hung out. It might have had something to do with the late licence. It was probably more to do with the fact that everyone knew someone who worked there and so there was never a shortage of beer. Suffice to say that I was quite often down at the bar. And so were Kenny & Een who had a residency every 2nd Wednesday night. I remember them performing under the name "Bobby Dazzler" for a while and, believe me, they dazzled my bobby alright.

I first met Cheehi Shitbox and El in my 1st year, as we were mutual friends of a desperate man. Quite a few missed-lectures later El was working in the Hundredth Monkey, which was pretty much next door to the CD Outlet on South Street. Jason (aka Billy Pilgrim R.I.P.) worked there. I think Kenny started working there for a bit before CD Outlet high command closed the shop and the both of them took it over. Fence (which had previously existed in Kenny's head, on the odd cdr and on every 2nd wednesday) now had a permanent physical form. It even had a natty wooden sign above the door, which can now be seen hanging up in the Fence office. Nice!

I don't know what was in the water back then but there seemed to be a lot of daftness going about. A few of my friends got involved in The St Andrews Citizens, which was Fence's first super-group. Except it wasn't always super, but it did inspire a helluva lot of folk with their daft instrumentation and unconventional take on entertainment. Over time this morphed into a more trad (but still out there) King Creosote & Co. live show. My first glimpse of the limelight was on one of these nights. I'd been writing odd songs for a wee while and when Jason heard "Mantra-K" he reckoned it'd be a laugh if I sang it during a KC set. The condition being that I'd have to stay up "on stage" all night... I think that's where the "laugh" came in. To this day I think I must be KC's only dancing goon. Not wanting to relive that experience I guess I decided to get my own band together.

Luckily for me there was always room for an interesting filler on the Aikman's music nights, as they, more often than not, would run on all night long. When bands like the José and Gummi Bako wriggled out of the woodwork the Fence Collective was really starting to get it on in public. Ooer!

These first collective nights were dubbed "a night behind the fence" and would have more acts and line-up changes than you could spill a pint at. However, at the heart of the Fence

live experience were the three brothers Anderson. Kenny "King Creosote" (on-the-money folk overlord); Gordon "Lone Pigeon" (trance-inducing mynah bird) and Een "Pip Dylan" (master of instrumentality extraordinaire). Just like the ultimate mecha in an anime show, when the three of them combined it became something super-special. I've only seen it a couple of times but boy could it enrapture. "Waterfall" springs to mind...

I used to pop into the Fence shop after work 'cause it was a hub for all-sorts of Fence shenanigans. Folks would drop in and drop out all of the time. Unfortunately not enough of us bought any records so the shop eventually folded. But that's another story.... It was here that I saw the 1st homemade Fence cdrs. On Kenny's recommendation I picked up "Who's Afraid Of Fence" (aka Sampler #01) and Lone Pigeon's "28 Secret Tracks". This was such an ear opener. What a record. I ended up giving my cdr copy to a friend to spread the word. What a klutz I was!

At that time Fence didn't really have much of a presence beyond the city walls. There was a website but it was more of a lyric archive (which I'm sure some of you would love) than anything else and didn't fully represent the growing collective. So it was in the back shop that I knocked together the "mystery meat" style website with the very 1st Beef Board. [There were quite a few in-jokes in those days (some things never change - eh?) and fact-fans may be interested to know that the expression "what's your beef?" came into common Fence parlance as a result of Uncle Beesly's brother's monologic ranting.] Little did I know what I, or indeed the Cheezy Pastamasta, were getting ourselves stuck into?

I guess it's inevitable that we would slowly poke our collective heads above the Fence in a furtive fashion. Kenny knew this comic called Dan Freedman who had a Latin-American character called Mundo Jazz. Dan had a run at the Edinburgh Fringe for about 3 weeks and enlisted the KC live band to back him up. I think Colin Shitbox and Beesly were also in the band at that point. It was decided that it'd be good to capitalise on all the attention that the shows would bring and release a new Fence sampler (Fence Go Fishin') to sell after the shows. The Picasso Bros aka Kevin @ Rock Sensations was the man behind the artwork for Sampler #02... Sadly the artwork was probably the best thing about it. Due to the fact that everyone was just getting into gear, the cdr was kinda cobbled together. I don't know how many copies of this are out there but it's proof that every cloud can have a shitey lining. However it was a milestone. It was the 1st Fence release to have an Anderson bros content of less than 100%. It was only a matter of time before we'd try to do a proper record.

After the quasi-mythical Lone Pigeon returned to Fife from the latest of his epic pilgrimages, things seemed to pick up a notch or two. Fence tracks were starting to be heard in far-off places (thanks to the sterling efforts of JY & Co.) and the good folks there seemed to like them. At the time it seemed like such an unconceivable thing but FHQ somehow persuaded itself that the best course of action was to do the unthinkable and release a REAL cd of us collectees! The imaginatively titled Sampler #03 was to be that record. I was sharing a flat with Jason at the time and I remember Kenny came round one night and asked me to prepare the artwork for printing. How could I not do the old man from Del Monte routine? If only we'd remembered to put a tracklist on the back... or at least within easy reach. Doh!

It was an exciting time. In those days Fence was a very local and social scene. There were countless Sunday Social all-dayers and parties for every occasion. And they'd more often than not be fancy dress. One night we even had a Dingy Dell puppet show with the Dark Lord giving life to the furry friends that popped out of Billy Corgan's bumhole. You really had to be there. And folks knew that because every night was always so different and you never knew what to expect next. It's a good job too or we probably wouldn't have got away with it.

So plans were hatched for Fence's 1st mega-gig. Rather than cram half of Aikman's full of bands, Kenny & Jason hired the local Cosmos Centre. Looking back at it now, it was probably the proto-homegame. We had all the Fence names; KC, PD, LP, JY, GB + The José boys; and Fence fans from Glasgow, Hartlepool and beyond. Yes, even some "industry" types! Due to one drink or another, I don't recall much about the show itself but afterwards we had a great beach party. The Lone Pigeon deadpanly announced to all that he was about to play the greatest song in the world. He then proceeded to smash up his acoustic guitar and chucked it on the flames. It seemed to go down a treat. So did the vodka, which was probably why I woke up in the surf the next morning. Later that day as I was sprawled out to dry outside the Fence shop I'm sure I caught a glimpse of Jenny Casino's pirate boots as she tut-tutted by...

I'd been living in St Andrews for almost 10 years by this point and although there were still buttons to be made, I'd seen too many friends leave for better things. I figured that as my band all lived in Edinburgh that I should flit to the city and try and make a go of it. Well, that didn't last long. Fence kept calling me back to my musakal home. In fact I probably spent more time in Fife that year than in Edinburgh. I'd kip on Kenny's living room floor at night and crank up Fence's P1 during the day, with the odd trip to Adamson's the bakers and the East Neuk Hotel for we all know that man cannot live on bread alone.

Concubine Rice was the order of the day and the day was mighty long. It seemed like aeons passed in-between the album being compiled and its final release. I lost count of the track backtracking and legal shenanigans involved in that fiasco of a record. But I'm not here to point fingers so let's just say that it was a naïve time and gentlemen's agreements are only as good as the ladies and gents that they bind.

So to break the monotony of endless days on the Concubine Rice production treadmill Kenny & I would buzz down to Anstruther, as it's the slack capital of East Neuk life. There was a 2nd hand record store / café there called The Bluenote that ran an irregular after-hours music night. 'Twas there that we met the numerous Anster Heroes that help make each day here in the East Neuk anything but a chore.

However it was on my birthday at a Süpergun gig that we really met Jenny Casino (aka HMS Ginafore). She'd been knocking about the Neuk since... well you shouldn't hint at a lady's age and pastimes... but I do remember her saying that she'd been to a Khartoum Heroes gig in Crail Hall, which I'm sure when you're at school in Anster is like going to CBGB's. We pestered her for a demo tape after hearing that she'd been recording on her alarm clock / tape deck combo. We liked it. She gave us some shortbread and some scones too. Mmm mmm, we liked them 'n aw.

After the sketchily drawn-out sales of Sampler #03 we thought it'd be wise to throw some more money down the pan and really go for broke. Doing an actual Fence Collective album seemed the best way to go about this. But not knowing how to record such a thing we threw out the nets to the folks that we knew and dragged in some half-baked recordings, which we then jumbled up in an old sea-chest before casting them back out to some other witless wonders. And as you might expect "Let's get this ship on the road" is quite a mad record as a result. It's even become a little nest egg for us because we "only" made 1000 (what were we thinking?) yet whenever we think we've run out another bing-load always turns up. The fake barcode pretty much says it all.

Musical adventurers Pinkie Maclure & John Wills had set up home in Cellardyke and had got in touch with KC about stuff. They arranged to meet at a Bluenote night and were slightly

conspicuously attired in the way that incomers are – ourselves included. They had a workshop and studio in the 'Dyke and pointed KC in the direction of a nice man that could potentially give Fence a new lease of office life - to tell you the truth I think Kenny was keen to get me off his floor so he could sweep it properly. Half of Anstruther is under the custody of the local ironmonger general, and whilst purchasing the last ever tin of creosote, Kenny managed to secure a lot of a dilapidated building for the princely sum of £5 per week.

When we moved in we had a poke about in the detritus-strewn attic and were pretty freaked by the dead pigeon nailed to the wall and a big red HELLO daubed on the wall. I didn't like it much up there. During deadline fever I'd a few scary sleepovers listening to the nocturnal scabbings behind the attic door that we'd decided to jam shut. Eventually I decided my health and sanity were more important and moved all my gear out. These days I'm holed up in a secure bunker far beneath the dank Cellardyke streets. Ner ner, you can't get me now!

We'd met Andy Kelly at the Cosmos show and he was keen to put some dates together to get the Fence roadshow on the go. Being a Hartlepudlian he booked us into his hometown and luckily for us we did a stomping show. It was also lucky that the footy had gone well earlier on so the atmosphere was buoyant to say the least. We became unofficially twinned with Hartlepool that night and that bond has saved our bacon a fair few times now. Scooping soup in an overcrowded camper van during an almighty gale while our tents were busy doing a lap of honour around Stratford upon Avon race ground being a particular highlight. I was on two runs of Kelly's Heroes and they were pretty hard work and madcap. Towards the end of the 2nd tour I must've completely lost it in Madchester 'cause I vaguely remember wandering around the audience in a daze carrying a broken guitar up until the encore when I reappeared with a tiny, little ukulele. It seemed to go down well but I don't think I'll put that particular trick in my repertoire again. I could go on and on about tour antics but you know what they say, "what happens on tour stays on tour" – probably because you can't relate to it unless you've been through it too. Besides there just isn't room to blabber on about it here...

But I'm getting off track... I'd decided to make a permanent move back to Fife as I spent most of my time there anyway. For a while I elegantly slummed it up at HMS Ginafore's coastal retreat and had to sneak out to the office whilst the nitpicking landlord (who lived next door) was distracted by the whiff of his little pansies in the back garden. Aaah... yet another farcical episode of Neighbours Anster-style.

As there was no heating and an effin' great hole in the roof, the office, though romantic, was hardly practical for the long days and nights ahead. My parents lent us a gas heater to take the sub off the zero. Maybe it was the gas that did it; maybe it was just the madness of trying to run on vapours all the time. I don't know... but one thing for sure - we weren't short of laughs and quite often engineered pointless puzzlers primarily for our own amusement. One year we ran a Pleasurehunt on the website and a young J. Lynch (who'd been pinging our pong with his Pictish Trail demos for some time) somehow won. He claims we told him the answers. I reckon he's probably right. You see, the prize was a Fence "to do" list... why don't you ask him about it? He might make it worth your while ;)

Funnily enough it was also in Aikman's that I first remember seeing Johnny Lynch doing a "fat man" skit with his comedy cohort Hairy Harry Thatcher. Some things never change! And you know what? I bet the tatty, old sofa that the Fence shop bequeathed to Aikman's after it closed its shutters for the last time is probably still down at the bar to this day...

...thanks for hangin' around
me and my oh-so-many shadows, GB

James Yorkston recalls...

The word "Fence" started its musical connotations for me when Kenny told me he was buying the auld record shop in South Street. I thought he was mad – there's been many wee record shops in St A, but they've always closed down within a year or two, due to the might of Menzies & Woolies. Prior to that, for me "Fence" was just a wee logo on the Arm1st1ce cassette – which is worth getting for the track Leslie. Anyway, I'd left the band I'd been in, due to deafness and hatred of the music we were playing. I'd re-sat my exams, and planned to go back to college, and be a normal. But before then, I was going to give it 18 months doing my own music. Just so I could say to myself I'd done it. Somehow I thought it'd make the rest of my life easier to live. Being on the dole wasn't a whole heap of fun though, so I'd graduated into a part-time job at a bookshop. Yee ha!

Whenever I could though, I'd started coming along to Kenny's cabaret shows at Aikman's. Playing a bit of Mandolin, bass, whatever. Ace Of Spades on a mandolin? I'm your man. It was a very free atmosphere – as in, any one could play, if they really wanted. And, having spent the last few years rehearsing the same 10 songs over and over, that freedom appealed to me. I remember quite clearly sitting at the side of the stage playing along with some singer or other I'd never met, picking out notes to songs I'd never heard on my mandolin, whilst sitting beside me a young lassie was doing exactly the same on her fiddle – and she didn't know the songs either. When I say that anyone could play if they wanted, the good thing was the scraffiness of the whole affair put the Brown Eye Girl brigade off. Thank The Lord.

It was there I first saw Gordon play – he was amazing. Jaw droppingly good. I remember feeling very sorry for whoever had to follow him. Kenny was pretty much playing Dubh & Khartoum stuff then, alongside some new things and some improvised madness. There seemed to be a few regulars turning up, some of whom appeared to really not like the music, but then went clapped like dafties if we attempted a traditional tune. I guess there's not so much live music in St A. Like flies to keich.

There was loads of other nonsense going on also – one of my songs had been played by Peel, and it'd stirred up a bit of interest from a few labels – Bad Jazz, 4AD and a London label. As a result, I'd had 'Moving Up Country, Roaring The Gospel' released by micro-indie Bad Jazz. I put Bad Jazz in touch with Lone Pigeon, and we did a split 7" together. I think Bad Jazz did a

whole Pidge album also? I put Bad Jazz in touch with King Creosote and they printed up 500 copies of So Forlorn, and promptly hid them under their bed. Sorry about that Kenny.

However, I found myself being in the bizarre situation of wooed by the London label who'd heard me on Peel. Strangely though, they didn't like my instrumentation, or my choice of tunes. Hmm. When they first heard 'Lang Toun' they complained about the small-pipes and suggested I replaced it with a Moog. They didn't think much of my companions, either. Both my suggestions of King Creosote & Lone Pigeon were dismissed (too Scottish / too mad, respectively). Just as well really, it wasn't a great experience. Although the London label were nice people, their superiors were not. They all liked UNPOC though. Huzzah! Maybe they had Swedish blood.

Anyway, Kenny kindly let me put an album out through Fence whilst I waited for the London label to get their finance together. So, I put together an 11 (?) track cd – mostly the demos from my first album "proper". That was good. It was a great feeling going into the record shop and seeing my cd there.

Around that time, I'd been at a Future Pilot AKA show with my old pal Mike. After the show, when most people had left the venue, there was this guy standing by himself, looking a little sheepish. "that's LB from Domino", said Mike, "let's get him out for a pint – he's a decent fella" (Mike knew the London lingo). So, we did just that. I didn't know his label, and as I was "just about" to sign to the London label, I felt no need to schmooze. So, we got on quite well. He told me about all these people whose records he released, and I told him about all my pals from Fife. The evening went on pretty late – we ended up in the West End backpackers, with Riley & Ian (now Aberfeldy), playing Gram Parsons tunes on an old upright piano at 4am. Oh, and some crazy Italian guy cut his chest open with a bottle. Hmm. But, LB & I swore drunken friendship.

Next morning, I figured I'd never hear from the guy again, but a few days later, he sent me a dozen or so Domino cds. Wow. Some of it's pretty good stuff, too – Four Tet, Papa M, Smog, Crivvens. That's a good wee label he's got going. So, I sent him a cd of Fence tunes, including 4 songs each by Lone Pigeon / King Creosote / UNPOC / J. Wright Presents and a few other randoms – Billy Pilgrim, etc. HMS G wasn't in my consciousness at that stage, or she'd've been on there. LB liked the cd and the idea of a 'scene'. So, he came up to see us all play, at the St Andrews Cosmos centre. Without boring you all anymore with reasons, so did the Sketchbook / Bad Jazz / Mute / 4AD crew. Quite a coup for Fife. It was also quite a show. Gordon Pigeon was in

fine voice and dressed like a messiah, and we ended the night with a mighty freeform 'Lang Toun', featuring KC / LP / JY / Pip Dylan / Uncle Beesly / Reuben DeafMute plus another few people who I can't quite place. Braw as a craw. Brill as a krill. I think that was the first time that I heard 'Happy Song'. Good stuff, as Bauchop would say.

Domino ended up putting records out by KC / LP / UNPOC / JY, which really helped things along, press and attention wise. We started finding ourselves in different parts of the world, mostly apart, but sometimes partly together – Sweden springs to mind, with the UNPOC live band, being Bauchop / KC / Pictish Trail / JY, plus Lone Pigeon playing on the same bill. That Lone Pigeon show in Stockholm was immense, as O'Neill would say. Pidge started with that brilliant tune where he's playing a scary church organ, before it melds into the Star Wars theme. After a few minutes of that he starts howling on top. It always gets me. The audience were baffled and wide eyed. But they were happy with his star jumps. Easier to get. Everyone knows a good star jump when they see one. Later on that tour, we were playing on a town bandstand (like the one in front of the R'n'A), in front of a few hundred crazy UNPOC fans, but they recognised all of us, and we all got to do a wee showpiece. Even Johnny Pictish Trail, though they thought he was the darts player Bobby George.

But there's too many memorable Fence events to mention properly – the 3 Green Man festivals, each one impossibly better than the previous; the 5 hour show we did at Lynton & Lynmouth; the rock star Mojito fueled wedding in Bavaria where 2 of the female guests were in shock having taken a midnight walk and discovered 2 locals f**king a cow; the JY / KC tours of the UK & elsewhere... (don't put a drunk KC in front of a Welsh audience, by the way); announcing an HMS G tune onstage in Canada and hearing from the audience "I ken her da!"; Uncle Beesly & Kate bringing their bairn to the Edinburgh Caves show; Rob & Julie's after-wedding shebang where Kenny, Johnny & myself sang Old Maid for an hour straight, with every verse becoming more ludicrous and insulting ("I have a friend called Kenny, he's no' handsome or guid looking"). Hopefully there'll be a few more. Wha' kens whaur we'll all be in 10 years? Pictish Trail will have won a Mercury, UNPOC the Swedish entry for Eurovision, HMS Ginafore will be a sea captain, the Lone Pigeon a pirate, and Pip Dylan will be a famous luthier. KC'll no doubt have his own chat show. Me? I'll be back at the bookshop, but working full time. That's progress.

skuobhie dubh orchestra

• a new cat •

the last album recorded by the skuobhie dubh orchestra was arguably our best. "a new cat" was incredibly well played, brutally honest and cringeworthy heartfelt, only the band broke up almost immediately after it was mixed down and so it was never released. oh, we made maybe 100 cassette copies, but it is now 10 years on, and everyone involved has moved on. the history of this record and the demise of the sdo were catalysts for fence and king creosote, so where better to tell the sordid tale than in this anniversary edition of the fencezine?

the saga starts with the break up of the original sdo in 1994. we'd just changed our name to "khartoum heroes" when a couple of the main players decided to call it a day. coincidentally, so too had edinburgh's "miraclehead". we had a guitarist / singer and a bass player; they had an electric guitarist / singer and a drummer. hmm... guess what happened next? well, the two halves came together in summer 1994, learned to play louder, and this defined the khartoum heroes as a new and separate entity altogether.

in the summer of 1995 the khartoum heroes scored a couple of shows in europe. we'd spent february recording demos, we'd played quite a few toilet gigs throughout the spring, but the european tour we'd been promised turned out to be just the two shows - one in a squat club in leiden, the other a college gig somewhere in belgium? we'd been hoping for a month in the sun, so we decided we'd go busking before and after our two shows. it sounds like a dreadful venture, but in fact we had an absolute blast. we took a ferry to cherbourg, a drive down to la rochelle, and a faff about the middle of france before the first gig itself.

our gig in the squat club allowed us to stay in leiden and to play another pub gig up the road for 240 guilders plus as much free white beer as we could swallow. we swallowed a lot, and had one of the best shows / hangovers of our yearlong career. the busking was a laugh, we re-learned skiffle, we put a couple of big dents in the van. the band coming home from that trip was very divided...

as i explained, the khartoum heroes were originally two parts miraclehead, two parts skuobhie dubh orchestra, but now we had a couple of extras. we wanted to play more acoustic shows, we wanted to busk, and we wanted everything to be simpler. no more rehearsals, demos, debts and game plans. just more shows in pubs, and more travelling in summer. our ethos had shifted back to that of the skuobhie dubhs, and all it took to exchange drum sticks for blast sticks was a little sunshine and a heated argument or two.

the band that emerged from the collapse of the khartoum heroes at the end of summer 1995 seemed keen on a return to life. we called this new band "shoe market hour", but when we played our first shows in st andrews pubs like the new inn, the featherie and firkin and the whey pat tavern, many students in their 3rd and 4th years remembered the original sdo from their 1st year at uni. they turned out in droves to see us, and they ignored our daft "shoe market hour" monicker. apparently we looked and sounded a lot like the sdo of old! uncanny really seeing as we were two parts original sdo anyway. in the autumn we met a wee someone that caused incredible upheaval for everybody, and it was in this weird emotionally charged environment that we booked studio time. with the bulk of my savings i booked a ticket to the u.s. of a. to see my old busking compadre joe collier. we had even inherited a white montego estate!!

i'd worked very hard organising and playing shows. i'd started having panic attacks. i was having an almighty yet useless crush. i was about to be kicked out of my cottage on teasses estate with its ridiculously low rent. we played 3 or 4 times a week up to christmas, 3 or 4 times in between christmas and new year, and on the 1st january itself. on january 2nd i returned to my wee house thinking it was a simple matter of packing a few things for the holiday i'd booked only to find the pipes had frozen and burst! i then spent hours with freezing water raining down on my head, and as it got dark outside i tried to salvage diaries, stereos, tapes and furniture. i cried, laughed, shouted, cried and laughed round and round, always in that order, until the estate owner mr black arrived and in a plummy voice said "aaah, where's your stopcock?".

now, i'd known mr black for maybe 5 years. he wasn't married, i never saw a lady other than his old housekeeper about the place, and he named his 3 donkeys after old girlfriends - yeah, annabel, susan and one other - and for a while i was his chauffeur. this meant driving him to various scottish golf courses at high speed for him to lose 150 quid per hole after well over par hole whilst i burned as much fully leaded as i felt like in the meantime. i earned 80 quid for an afternoon's work, clocked up speeds of over 135 mph on the m90, but i never once heard him use the word "stopcock". that's maybe the reason we couldn't find the damn thing at 6 o'clock on january 2nd. i was too stunned. not only had i never heard him use the word, i hadn't heard anyone use the word, and had i heard him correctly? what did he need to find?

now i definitely needed that holiday. for a month i could maybe sidestep band stress, lady friend stress, home stress, stress stress and a few worries an' a'...

i paid mc quake a month-long visit in january 1996, and our big tour of the wild west and california made a huge impact, but somehow increased the feelings of unease and panic. don't get me wrong - i had an amazing time, but it only made this perpetual rush i seemed to be in all the more... um... perpetual?

i turned 29 the day of my arrival home. there were 3 of the band all singing happy birthday as i cleared baggage reclaim. there were no gigs in the diary however, and i went straight back into losing my long-term girlfriend all the quicker. as if that wasn't enough, i was back living with my parents, i was completely skint, and within a week of coming home i was in a right state.

we went into riverside studios for 2 weeks at the end of february. i cried during the recording of "works every time". then there was the dunblane massacre. we ended the session in complete and utter shock. in the month after i would burst into tears at the slightest thing, couldn't and wouldn't settle anywhere or with anyone, i'd spend all night panicking and not sleeping, i lost weight... well, it couldn't all be bad... i learned one of my school chums had become a millionaire, my band started to look a little shifty eyed and when i accidentally kicked over a pot plant and collapsed at the top of the stairs in utter despair my mum made me go see dr clark.

what a sap! having lead a fairly charmed life, there's nothing like several years of parental and peer pressure followed by a major upheaval to get those serotonin levels plummeting. i didn't listen to "a new cat" for some time - i was too busy mixing anti-depressants with whatever came my way legally or otherwise, and having a well-deserved laugh. i left band life behind, i left the music business behind, and i gave myself a bit of time to come up with a plan...

... and here we are 10 years on. skuobhie dubh orchestra's "a new cat" has finally been re-jigged, re-mastered and re-launched with this very fencezine.

the songs

we decided on a few originals from the live set, a few reworked from my four track recordings, and a couple we'd just leave to chance. i had an early tape of mc quake's rants, and had stored up a few ideas. as "shoe market hour" we'd recorded a 60 minute tape's worth of bluegrass and original songs by playing them live into two microphones, so we reckoned we were brave enough to attempt this same method again but with more microphones and less bluegrass.

the band

stu bastiman (now with serial p.o.p. and manager of the bricklayers arms?) on drums had been the miraclehead drummer with vic and james, then the heroes' drummer, and was now as versatile a drummer as you could wish for. he was also trying to learn guitar, and had a knack for random keyboards.

pete macleod (now uncle beesly) on electric bass had joined the band in 1994 just as the sdo became the khartoum heroes, and was this: the best.

een anderson (now pip dylan) had been mouthie player, double bass player, banjo player and now guitar player with all the different sdo line-ups since 1989.

kenny anderson (now king creosote) on acoustic guitar, accordion, and anything percussive or keyboardy.

steve mackie (now where's yer baccy?) on fiddle. he joined late in 1995.

kate tunstall (now kt) on backing vocals. kate sang bvs with the dubhs and heroes on her summer holidays from college, and we must've played shows together during the christmas break.

the recording

we'd been to riverside the year before with the khartoum heroes, so we knew about playing live to tape, first take overdubs, and where to buy pizza and chips. we knew we'd start late and work late, and that our engineer johnny cameron would take on board any daft ideas, and would maybe even play guitar on a track? we had 16 analogue tracks to abuse.

on the first day we set up and recorded maybe 3 or 4 backing tracks. by day 3 we'd recorded 15 or 16 backing tracks. then it was bass overdubs, guitar overdubs, vocals and accordion and keyboards and radios and washboards and percussion and samples and that was us for the first week. een had a day or two to do banjo, guitar, mouthie and backing vocals, then we got steve in for an afternoon, and then kate the same. we were done. 2 days to mix it and we had a new cat.

the album

strangers to disappointment

i wanted the album to start with a false start. mc quake and i were the true and original s.t.d.s... oh, the in-jokes we have...

works every time

this is how pathetic things can get when you go crazy over a new face in the pub. we'd never tried anything of this style before, but stu, a big fan of radiohead's the bends, was tiring of tap-a-tippy drumbeats and nailed this. we had wine glass samples and a submerged submarine sonar noise.

real shiver stuff

i suppose this was a pep talk to myself when life was getting me down. i've lost count of the times i use the c g d chord progression, but was chuffed to find a new melody regardless.

mortgage

again, get a grip. this could be all you need to get things into some perspective. i only needed to wait 18 months and i'd know all about it for sure.

shape of a girlfriend

sorry ladies but this is exactly how it is for most of us chaps. ha ha.

sew wet seams

oh dear, i'm still not painting a very good picture here...

insomniac

no wonder!

flying overnight

right, we're on slightly less shaky territory now. this is a tale of the lone pigeon's exploits, watered down and poeticised for the masses naturally. this was a live favourite for yonks.

lavender moon

this was a solo effort by een late on in the recording session. he didn't want anybody else playing on it, which we found a wee bit odd at the time.

reel shiver stuff

we had too much happening on a few songs, and made a few brutal swipes at the

mute button. this fiddle part by steve mackie deserved to be kept though. it's one of my favourite moments on a new cat - very highland sounding...

how's your tongue?

mr black, boss of teasses estate, had a huge house a half-mile up a rough track. we had to pass it everyday to get to our wee house, but apart from on certain rent days when i'd get to see the one room he seemed to live in with a few dogs, i always wondered what the rest would look like... a year or so after penning this tune, a student film company came up to see us and to interview the heroes. mr black seemed to think that the house would end up in some major hollywood production, and invited us all in - the front door!

monsieur le charmant

even after i'd been to paris and up to montmartre, i somehow refused to let go of the romantic notions i had about artists, cobbles, bad drainage and boho chicks.

lady luck

some songs need that air of mystery around them, and this is the first of two. from one side of the fence...

pimp

... to the other. i'm hoping the naivety of the ideas cloud any suspicions a listener may or may not have.

outback self abuse

when we started with this song, we had all the keyboard parts and strings and didgeridoo samples and what have you laid down, the studio engineer johnny was very sceptical about this particular song right up until the end of the verses. when he heard the chorus, he couldn't believe his ears. i still can't believe i'd the courage to sing this at such a time in my life. even today i'm like "what the f**k were you thinking at the time to come up with this?" but it remains the most honest piece of writing i've put into song.

witch hat

driving to the studio on the first day of recording, we were driving thru' guardbridge when i shoved a tape of mc quake's rants into the montego tape player. i asked the band if we could use it behind a piece of music. we jammed the piece of music to the rant, and not only did we have the album closer, we had the album title before we'd even started.



SCOUT'S OUT FOR SUMMER

I first heard King Creosote, or what I later found out was King Creosote, when I wandered into Compact Discovery (soon to become the Fence shop) on South Street. It was "Marigolden Growth", and by the time we were a minute into "All Over Caroline" I was sold, or rather a copy of "Rain Weekend" was sold.

Billy Pilgrim, nee JasoninCompact, said he was learning the songs for a gig that week in Aikman's, I should come along. It was a St. Andrews Citizens' gig and it was great. Or maybe it wasn't, to be honest it was 8 years ago and whilst I'd like to say it changed my life, I'm not sure I can remember it now. But I do remember going every other Wednesday for my last year at school, and then plenty more after I returned from my 3-month degree course.

Fence was some of the first music that made me love music, and I spent most of my time (and money) in the shop, buying up King Creosote albums as quickly as he could produce them. I got the Citizens' "East Neukie" from Santa Claus, for crying out loud. And like everyone into Fence I would play anyone and everyone the CD's whenever I could, not understanding why they didn't get it. It seems like people are staring to get it now, and I'm glad. This was never a scene that wanted to be small; it just wanted to be right. And since that first time I heard "Rain Weekend", it hasn't put a foot wrong. Well, maybe some of that Citizens' album....

all the best, scout

'when richard met kenny'

My first encounter with Fence (or "Fence" as it was known in those days) was when I entered and won an online competition to be included on the legendary "John's ABC". I'm pretty sure it was 2000 - I had found my way to the website via the traditional Beta Band / Pigeons / Lone Pigeon route and promptly had copies of "Moses" and "28 secret tracks" thrown at me from 500 miles away.

Aside from winning competitions, I did nothing but listen to those two albums, stare at the walls of my own little studio and ask myself some questions for a good few months. The timing of this introduction coincided with a period where the Amino thing was on the verge of taking off and being batted around from one label to another, so the whole Fence approach was a perfect antidote to all the industry gibberish we were being subjected to. The contrast between waiting a couple of months for someone you've never spoken to at Big Knob Records to decide your fate and sending Kenny a few tracks, getting the nod and seeing them quickly included on a compilation full of interesting stuff couldn't have been greater. I was also bowled over by the unified front shown by a group of musicians - nothing like it could ever exist in Medway, and I was soon badgering the then significantly younger KC with tracks, requests for more Fence material and whispers and half-truths of our "bigger than Rebus" band.

limited edition cassette limited edition cassette

Fair to say Fence was a notably smaller operation then. None of this new fangled "Pictish Trail" in those days - KC was evidently running the thing single-handedly (assisted by a collection of pseudonyms) and the whole thing seemed to consist of little more than three brothers, a few Fife based artists (many of whom aren't household names today), random heads who appeared for a single track and were never heard of again, plus a yank called MC Quake. And now me. I'm sure there was more to it, but compared to the post-picket, post "Rules OK", nationwide Fence of 2006, it was pretty low key, although never low rent. I don't think the whole "Collective" tag was in evidence by then either.

I think I'd been in touch with Kenny a year or more and made a few more compilation appearances by the time the crew next came down to London town and I had a chance to experience the well-oiled (literally in GB's case) live machine. The venue was an arts café in the East End and my main memory of the evening was thinking KC looked like I expected LP to look and vice versa. I was also panicking, un-necessarily it turns out, that some wide eastender might take exception to LP's cockneyed up "Old Mr Muncher Man". In the end, my nerves got the better of me and I failed to say "hello Kenny" to a busy-playing-with-everyone KC that night. That historic clash of hairstyles was saved for his next visit to London for a collective show at a club called Cherry Jam in Notting Hill, as far as I can remember. Lou Barlow was all over "Concubine Rice" at this point, so he played, which was a bit odd, and I remember being impressed by KC's toy duck timekeeping, GB's hat and the general ambience of the night. I was ashamedly a bit wasted that night though, so I failed to meet 'n greet anyone other than a quick hello to KC. This was a trend that continued for years until 2005's Homegame.

Sooo, the days turned into weeks, months and years and I managed to trick Fence into putting out a few pickets and a handful of tracks here and there on some of the old 'shop' compilations (which were great), all the while keeping a safe distance and pretending not to know where Fife might be. At the same time, we slowly introduced the Aminos into the mix without Kenny noticing as our adventures in the world of Massive Records Ltd came to a slightly rain sodden end somewhere on the London-Middlesex border. I managed to miss the first Homegame due to some prior skinning up / tv watching commitments in London, but second time around made the epic trek up and started to put a few faces to names. Slightly surreal to meet such a huge number of familiar names in 48 hours and definitely not the sort of thing I do with ease, but it was good to finally pay homage. and here we all are today. (to this day I suspect I was the only entrant in that competition)

Rich Amino

on cassette limited edition cassette limited edition

FINDING FENCE

I'm often asked how I got involved with Fence. Well here's how it started for me:

It's October 2001 and I'm driving to East Kilbride for a gig, Vic Galloway is on the radio and he plays this track that makes me whack the volume right up. It is of course 'Rocks' by Lone Pigeon. I force myself to remember the track details until I get to EK and jot down the essentials. A few days pass and I find the bit of paper so I search Google for 'Lone Pigeon' and Fence Records appears. I visit the website and print off an order form. I place an order for the Rocks 7", Moses, and Who's Afraid Of Fence (sampler #1). My order arrives the following week and I email Kenny to thank him. We exchange an email or two and I mention that I write my own tracks so upon request I send him most of the tracks I'd been working on, including a track I'd co-written called Burt's Magical Hands. I also place an order for Sampler #3 and Pip Dylan's Ain't a Classical Piece.

I go on a snowboarding holiday to France so I take the CD's with me. Sampler #1 hardly left the stereo for the duration of that holiday. I returned to find my Sampler #3 & Pip CD's had arrived 'plus' a request to use the BMH track on a Fence sampler. Now, at the time I was working with another DJ and we went under the name Aerodynamico. The other guy got the gigs and I more or less wrote the music. The CD I had sent Kenny was under the name OnTheFly, so for the Avalanche Sampler, Kenny had put OTF on the credits and not Aerodynamico. Well, this caused a fair bit of grief between Aerodynamico. I did try to pester Kenny to change the credit to keep the peace but the artwork was complete.

My first meeting with Fence was on 29th Dec 2001 for a fancy dress party in Aikmans St. Andrews. Nikki and I booked a B&B and headed up. When we got there we got our gear on (Cowboy & Indian) and headed to the venue. Kenny greeted us at the door; he was dressed as some dead guy with a top hat and shades. There were lots of great costumes, the most memorable being some guy in a furry cat suit (Gummi Bako), and another guy with a papier-mâché Alien Head smoking a large pipe (Lone Pigeon). I get speaking to Kenny at the bar, "So yeah who's this King Creosote guy, I really like his stuff". Kenny laughs "eh yeah that's me". Later on the band plays and I'm completely blown away. Where had Fence been all my life? Up yours Bono, I've found exactly what I'm looking for.

Thank you Vic & Gordon for the Rocks session, thanks Kenny for getting me onboard, and thanks to EVERYONE else, including you.

Happy Anniversary Fence,
OnTheFly

I ♥ FENCE

I first started interfering with the Fence Collective at the turn of the century. I happened upon a couple of their events through the power of shared acquaintance, i.e. I knew Billy Flamingo and the drug-takers of St Andrews and so did they!! My inaugural experiences of the spirit of Fence were characterised by general embarrassment on my part, which, has since proved to be a sure sign of what was to come.

I was once picked out of the crowd at Aikman's bar to take part in a "Cream Cracker and Fun-Sized Mars Bar Eating Competition" as a King Creosote-led ramshackle set-up played like a New Orleans funerary procession band in the background. I didn't know any of these guys at this stage, all I knew was the urban myth about Kenny being in his 50s... Then there was the time I dressed up as a lion for one of their Fancy Dress parties and made a huge effort to stay in character during conversation, making clever references to raw meat, thrones and the jungle – of course what I didn't realise was that nobody could make out a word I was saying through the muffling rubber sheath of my mask... and then there was the time in the Fence shop when I accidentally left my credit card behind then acted out an elaborate dramatic response in order to cover up my scatter-braininess to the bemusement of the since excommunicated counter assistant... I was at the Cosmos thing too but don't remember hearing a note of music...

I could go on... but this all happened before I even knew that such a thing as Fence existed and I've already used up half a page! One thing I am actually proud of is that I won an Aliens CD in a "Make up Song Titles Competition" they once ran in the pub... one of my suggestions was "I ate my mum, she tasted good".

It was when members of the collective started coming down to the legendary Blue Note Café fortnightly open mic nights in Anstruther in the winter of 2001/2002 that I actually sat up and listened. They say that people tend to miss all the things that grow in their own back garden because they are always looking out over the gate but for me it has to be right there, just beyond the "Welcome" doormat. ANYWAY (I am never going to get through this story in one morning), suffice to say, friendships were forged and I was even coaxed into singing myself, albeit as part of the double act "Keichy Dee and Joe Shatriani" (played convincingly by a pre-beard Mr Gummi Bako). At this point I was still living in a big house in Pittenweem (Stabbs) with members of Fence rivals – the Anster Heroes – so there was a lot of Fence people-trafficking between St Andrews, Pittenweem, Edinburgh and Crail at this point which doesn't do much for the consolidation of a unit does it? Then, just as the dying embers of the Fence fire that burned up in St Andrews were having extinguishing sand sprinkled on them, a wee beacon was being lit down in the Neuk.

The boys set up their office in Dove Street, the proprietor of The Ship and Boat Taverns opened his doors to the Fence Adventurers, I managed to secure sleeping accommodation for all the weary travellers (The Pink House) then The Pictish Trail feathered a wee love nest on the banks of Caddie's Burn (as well as developing a cohesive Live Events policy) and gradually, over the course of a couple of years, we (I always say "we" but all I do is make the tea really), yes, THEY, the boys, they made the town their own and we've had some lovely nights as a result haven't we?

Remember the Office Launch party when, while KC was swimming in the harbour with a scantily-clad blonde, I fell unconscious in an old "built-in bed" next to OnTheFly and had my shoelaces tied together and was whipped with a tea-towel by Vic Galloway? Remember the gig in the café area of the Dundee Rep a couple of years ago when K.C sang so beautifully? Remember the Halloween party when we lured the Wilson twins over the Stepping Stones at mid-tide and they had to dry off their alien costumes by the Pink House fire? Remember the Gas Giant gig in the Ship on a SATURDAY NIGHT (what were they thinking?)? I don't, I wasn't there and I don't think anyone else was either... Remember the Valentine's Day gig in the Boat Tavern with The Bearded Clams? Wow, that was romantic! Remember those spellbinding Swedish singers in Pittenweem Community Hall? You could have heard a louse scurrying across the floor in between those perfectly pitched notes? Remember Uncle Beesly jumping through the campfire flames as part of his unreserved El Topo performance at last years Green Man Festival? Remember that odd little Art Extraordinary gig in a tiny art gallery in Pittenweem when the Lone Pigeon did some high-class stand-up in between songs? Remember the Süpergun gig in the Subway in Edinburgh where I got refused entry for looking underage (I was 27)?

My goodness I really could go on... but what I want to leave you with are the names of some of the characters who have joined us for this part of the journey – dwell on each name carefully and I'm sure your subsequent recollections will help you add your own images to this bewilderingly pleasing collage that is The Fence Collective – I hope it doesn't read too much like a Roald Dahl-esque war memorial roll of honour:

Earl Fudge
Little Pebble
Daydream Daisy
Wazza
Harry Axewound and the Ghoulies
Emily
Soundmartin
Dave Taylor
Pip Dylan
Reuben
PumaJaw
Earl Justice
Big Topp
Mayor Cakes
Kate Canaveral
Reporter
Stuarab
Le Baron Rouge – my ginger son
Mama Casino
Candythief
The boys from Viva Stereo
Jeanette
Sean Dooley

John Mark I and II
Armando
Ariel Blackadder
Junior Judo
Barbara and Malcolm
Colin and Jackie
Kate Wilson
Rob Cross
Johnny Blue Note
Paul Barclay
Frederick and Eva
Heriolf
Unpoc
Weasel Squeezer
Johnny Bradshaw
Jamie from Willis
Crail Folk Club
Gifford Lind
Prenders
John Golf-Ball Nose
Dale
Scruff
Dale and Scruff

I've been HMS Ginafore, you've been patient... Goodnight! xxxxxxxxxx



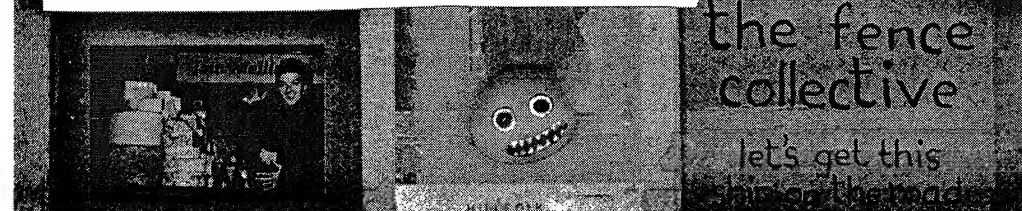
well aisle be... NORTHERN ALLIANCE

What better way to be introduced to the friendly face of Fence than at a wedding? My own wedding, to be precise. To my wife, of course. A few years ago I was on the lookout for a ceilidh band that weren't shit, to do the do at our do. If you've ever tried looking, you'll know it's amazingly hard to find a ceilidh band that isn't shit. Anyway, I asked a mate called Vic if he knew anyone decent, and he mentioned Kenny and Fence. I said I'd never heard of them. In fact, that wasn't true on a couple of counts. I'd seen Kenny performing in bands in Edinburgh years previously, but never realised. Me and Vic go back a stupidly long way, to a time when he was pulling faces in a band called Miraclehead and I was doing likewise in an outfit with the hilarious name of Cheesegrater. How we all laughed. Anyway, I'd seen Kenny in both the Skuobhie Dubh Orchestra and the Khartoum Heroes back in the day.

Also, I knew of 'Jamesy' (or James Yorkston as you might know him) from his time playing bass in Huckleberry with Vic. Then, in my capacity as a music journalist a few years later I had the pleasure of getting 'The Lang Toun' by some motley bunch called James Yorkston and the Athletes. I was blown away by it. But I never realised he was anything to do with Fence. Or Kenny. Or Fife. Or anything. Just thought he was a mate of Vic's who'd turned out to be brilliant.

So anyway, back to the wedding. Kenny pitched up at the Open Arms in Dirleton, East Lothian, with an assorted bunch of miscreants who proceeded to play an absolutely blinding couple of ceilidh sets with lots of hilarity thrown in. Over a pint in between sets Kenny and I got talking. Turned out we had similar ideas about a lot of stuff. He told me about Fence, I told him about Northern Alliance. We agreed to send each other some music.

A few weeks later I got Let's Get This Ship On The Road in the post, along with an extremely nice letter telling me that sadly the ceilidh band was no more. The Fence CD was haphazard genius and I loved it. A wee while later, my wife and I saw our first ever Fence Collective show in a tiny living room of a place in Dundee on a very hungover Sunday, I seem to recall. It was haphazard genius and we were smitten. And we remain so. Likewise for the rest of Northern Alliance, who I introduced to the wonder of Fence as soon as I could. Such is the way with Fence, ain't it? Yes, it is.



8th march 2003 @ aikman's:

went along to the latest fence night the other day. anyway the usual suspects were nowhere to be seen, papa boomhauer was doing an acoustic thing and the pub was unusually thronged for a wednesday night. was it down to an upsurge in student levels, the rise of the boomhauer or did they all know something we didn't? bumped into gords and was told that the usual suspects were due in at about ten-ish and they were dressing up! as old ladies!!

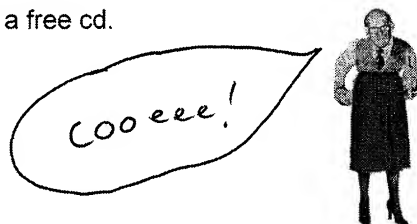
so some time after ten in appeared Mavis Lampstand on accordion, Mavis Massivebutt on, and i mean ON, the double bass, Mavis Spoons on the washboard, and finally Mavis Bass on err... the weddingesque guitar. they were done up like very old ladies, all big asses and tweed. it was very funny. they started with a cracking bassy tune and they all sang in charlatanesque falsetto. the whole pub was pishing itself laughing, the free guinness on offer obviously assisting, but it was great. they proceeded to play muzak versions of "like a virgin", with Mavis Lampstand singing the line 'touched for the very first time' in the most cringingly dirty way, and she seemed like such a nice old lady. also played were "don't you forget about me", "jolene", a hilarious "you give me fever" with Mavis Massivebutt on lead, dry-humping the double bass, "get your rocks off" all interspersed with jokes, stories and some rather unfair and potentially litigious crowd banter, my lawyers will be in touch KC!! after all that I had a sore face from laughing, it were great.

after around forty-five minutes or so they finished to rapturous applause before returning dressed in the usual cast-offs and looking more like the scruffy buggers who are the fence collective. all now playing their usual instruments they kicked off with some KC tunes, the first being the new one off the avalanche sampler ("worldly wise" me thinks?). it's great; a requested tune and they played it straight off. they did about another half hour and it was smashing but KC was suffering from all that falsetto singing and a virulent bout of the pox, sorry, tonsillitis so i think he was a bit knackered. after a "that's all folks" the last orders bell was rung and the Lone Pigeon gets up to do a number! after a few moments footering around with the guitar and mic he launches into "waterfall", whilst sitting cross-legged on a box, and christ what a voice, every time it surprises and bowls me over. time pauses and then he finishes, gets a rousing round of applause and slopes off with a 'that wasn't very good was it...' an incredible night.

cheers to fence, free music, free guinness and a free cd.
can life get any better?

bring back fency dress gigs!

arab



Hidden Keys by Tom u.n.p.o.c.

People often ask me how it is going with my new tunes.

"Are you almost finished your next album?" they say.

"Is it almost ready?"

"Why's it taking so long?"

What they don't get is that the road from Album One to Album Two is pretty but it is bendy too. Pretty but bendy. Pretty bendy. Just for an example, this week I am trying to learn to touch-type. I am using the Hidden Keys approach. I may have written on this topic before, I forget. It involves putting stickers over the keyboard keys. Supposedly you can master the skill in a week or so with this approach. Not an easy week, mind you.

Anyway, it was something Reuben told me. Reuben is in Fence too. I was trying to figure out a piano solo to a new unpoc song, The Bernese Oberland, and I phoned him for some piano solo advice. We got talking about touch-typing and the Hidden Keys scholastic approach and, well, there you go. A curve on the bendy road to Album Two.

But I've been doing this Hidden Keys thing for a month now and I have to tell you it is only half working, as a touch-typing learning aid anyway. It's a bit odd. I can type well enough with stickers over all the keyboard letters now, I'm pretty fast actually. Clickety-clackety clickty click I go, quite the thing, semi-pro, top level typing. But I still make loads of mistakes. To be honest, I make more than the acceptable number of errors. But it's quite good fun in a way. I'm not in a hurry and it's nice to cover the keys for a challenge.

I first met Fence in Aikman's, on one of those Sunday afternoon things. When we went in, they were doing a sort of warm-up. At least, I think it was a warm-up because it was early on in the day and there wasn't much of an audience to speak of. And Kenny was singing but not moving his mouth, which I noticed was shut, not open. Very interesting. I suppose it was a sort of ventriloquist thing he was trying out. And you'd have to say; he'd really mastered it. You could hear him quite clearly; it was very impressive.

They asked if I wanted to sing a tune but I declined.

I went to the thing at The Cosmos after that. There was no ventriloquist action but I did get two glasses of cola and a free copy of Fence's Sampler Number 3 cd. One of my songs, Amsterdam, was on the cd so that was nice.

My first Fence performance, you ask? Well, it was at the Hallowe'en party in the Ship. That was a good one. I like to think my borrowed outfit was that of a wizard but I suppose it was really more of a witch thing. James had asked if I'd like to sing a song and I said, "we'll see", which of course is the polite form of "no, I think not". I had never sung in public and had reservations, issues even.

However, in a crowded Hallowe'en situation I do suppose "we'll see" could sound pretty much like "Oui, Si". I think both James and Kenny would have known I am not French or Spanish but there you go. Within the hour I found myself up at the front struggling through my live stage debut triumph, battling my reservations, my issues, singing my heart out for all to hear, a shaky Amsterdam in full witch or wizard regalia.

DOWN THE TINY MEMOIRS

One of my favourite 'fence memories' is going through to Cellardyke to record for Fence Reunited.

Taking the x26 bus from Glasgow to Anstruther is a hellish journey of epic proportions. Fair enough, I've only done it the once but that was enough. It's not a coach service; it's a stop-at-a-stop-every-200-yards bus that takes about 3.5 hours. Hours that felt like days. For October it was sunny. The sun scraping through the dust hazed windows to bring out the real flavour of the crumbling foam seats. I tried to sleep through as much as I could but every so often the old man sitting across the gangway would wake me up to inform me that my adjoining seat was the last potentially free set on the bus. This would've been fine if someone was actually getting on and needing the seat but, more often than not, he was just letting me know. Thank you, sir.

I was very glad to get off at the shorefront. Even though there was no one there to meet me and I had no idea where I was going, I was just glad to have parted with my 40 seated nemesis.

I phoned Fence HQ. No answer.

I phoned Pictish. Voicemail.

I phoned Alan, who explained that they all thought I was arriving 4 hours later (last minute change of plans = my fault) and that he couldn't meet me cos he was in St Andrews.

'Do you know how to get to the office?'

'Aye.'

This wasn't as true as it could have been.

I'd been led to Fence HQ once before, 3 months prior... In the dark.

But I found it. Eventually.

After fruitless knocking and looking up at the windows, I spotted some movement.

'Kenny!' I shouted.

A head popped out of a window.

'Kenny's on tour.' It was, unknown to me, John Wills of PUMAJAW.

Is he? Have I gotten things horribly wrong? Well, I'm here now and Alan knows I am so I might as well sit down on the doorstep and enjoy the Mexican bean pasta salad I made at 8 this morning.

I remember the look on Pinkie Maclure's face when she turned up. Completely un-phased. Ardent fans must camp out there all the time. I smiled back and waved a fork hello.

So after about half an hour, Kenny gets wind I've turned up early and comes to get me in his hired behemoth of a car. We head back to his hoose where he makes me a cup of tea and lets me hear the tunes he's got lined up for me to slaughter. I sat there, tea in hand, headphones on, trying not to look worried as I thought 'Shit! What am I going to do to this?'

After a call from Pictish we're over at the blue rooms where the top bedroom, decorated with miscellaneous furniture, is to be my torture chamber.*

* I know I'm selling this as a scary & stressful situation, but I was loving every minute of it.

Back then I was a bit self-conscious about recording in front of people so Kenny kindly entrusted me with the operation of his multi-track recorder. I had to be careful where I recorded cos it was so full of works in progress. By god was I careful. I didn't let *dust* land on this thing.

Tune by tune I rattled through them at a pace that would give drying paint pins and needles. Only breaking to take a walk chippy-wards with KC & GB, to play them a few tunes off an album that would become Point Of Yes Return and to pass on a tape that I had brought as a present for Pip Dylan. It was a cover I'd done of his 'Lemonbelly'. Kenny, acting as postman, took it home, listened to it and decided it should go on the record. Result.

One fishcake too heavy, I was back in the electric chair bluffing my way through 'Nobody Knows / Last Man Standing'. Earlier Kenny had dictated the chord sequence to me.

'You know, how minor chords have a little b?' I had asked.

'Aye.'

'How do you write a major chord?'

'Well' said Kenny, trying not to condescend. 'You... don't write anything.'

'Oh... yeah'. Idiot.

That's my favourite of my contributions to the record. Bits of 'Lemonbelly' annoy me. I'm credited in 'Easily Led' but my vocals are so far down in the mix I don't think I should be. (This is not a criticism on whoever mixed it. My singing was pish). My wee guitar bit in 'Going Down To The Water' is fairly w@nky. But I'm happy with 'Last Man Standing' n.b. I do the twangy bits. And Pictish's cover of Floating is great. This was pre-Fine Tuning remember. In fact, we recorded the DtTS/PT intro that night too. Happy days.

That night, having left my sleeping bag in the back of Kenny's car, I slept on the bed-settee wrapped up in towels, throws and a pair of curtains that tickled my nose and kept me awake. I think I dreamt I had a moustache.

In the morning, I laid down my non-vocals on 'Easily Led'. Kenny thanked me for coming through but the pleasure was all mine. As Johnny & Alan saw me onto the bus I was a wee bit sad. Not at having to get back on the bus from hell, or because I hadn't had enough time to do my parts better but because I felt like I'd been a part of something and it had kind of flown by me. The unripe bananas I'd bought before boarding didn't cheer me, but the absence of an elderly Seat Availability Status Advisor did.

What I really want to say here is that it was an honour to be invited to appear on 'Fence Reunited'. The very title with its implications of a complete Collective back together & out in force. To be included in that makes me so proud. With living in the city, learning about the hideous but necessary evil that is the music industry as I try to make a living from the only thing I love to do (drinking tea, watching trashy American dramas and cavorting with my girlfriend-now-fiancé are not marketable skills apparently) and things changing all around me, I treasure the record as a very special piece of my past.

And it looks pretty good on my CV!

Hoots tae ye! Hoots tae Fence!

Jonnie DtTS xxx

CANDYTHIEF... *it's only snatchural!*

So, we'll fast forward the bit about me ending up in AFTC: I met JS in a warehouse in Dalston when I was depressed about doing session work for a soul-destroying manufactured band and we had a few jams and that was that.

My first Fence experience came when KC and PT came to play at the AFTC cd launch in September 04. Their set transfixed me and I was amazed by how much power such simplicity could have. (Especially as the whole idea of acoustic/folk music of any kind had pretty much passed me by until then. Yes. I was a philistine. Can we move on now?)

A month later, AFTC were on the road and the fifth date was in Edinburgh with Gummi Bako. By that point, we'd slept on warehouse floors, corridors and assorted friends' floors, and our moods had suffered. The van had exploded in Wales before a gig we played to four men and a dog in a mining town. I ended up doing all the driving, and much as I didn't let the others forget my immense heroism for the rest of the tour/year/ever, it was very trying driving for hours, summoning the energy to do a gig and then driving through the wet streets of unknown towns looking for that night's berth. The guy in charge of the cd player had a fondness for an album of Nirvana covers recorded by a Japanese Elvis impersonator; and even worse, one night he committed the cardinal sin of taking up the whole of a valuable double bed on his own and not sharing! I drank loads of coffee to stay awake and not kill everyone on the road; then I couldn't sleep, so one night I partook liberally of a large spliff someone was handing round. I am not normally a smoker and it was quite a strong one. I ended up cringing in a foetal position in the corner of a landing in a student house in Lancaster, miserable and paranoid and wishing with all my might I could wake up in my bed at home.

So, by Edinburgh our tones were clipped and conversations short. Luckily things improved rapidly - Gummi Bako rocked out and we had a blast. I broke endless strings on guitars not owned by me and no-one complained. Uncle Beesly came to the rescue restringing and passing them over in an unbidden, unforgotten display of guitar playing solidarity.

After the gig I met more Fencers (Akabako, Gummi Bako, Uncle B) and I felt a growing sense of relief that I'd finally met other musicians that I could relate to. I felt at home with how Fence fans and artists pursued their interest as something that required no justification or outside legitimacy or even any particular end. I'd found no parallels and nothing for me in the bands I'd dealt with in London, with their hungry defensiveness and their fear that the slices of pie were running out; with all the noise and front and bluster and nothingness underneath - but this was a different way of doing it and one that I wanted to know more about.

Barbarossa and Fence, up a tree...

My journey with Fence Records all started back at the beginning of 2005 when my friend Danny, who works in the music biz, sent Mr Lynch my 1st EP that I had just recorded at Adem's warehouse studio. I then received a lovely e-mail from said Mr Lynch who appreciated the musical content, but I do believe was more impressed by the home-made packaging (every EP was carefully stained with coffee, folded and stamped with the Barbarossa logo). So I started to find out what this Fence Collective was all about and the more I found out the more I liked it. These were people who made things happen themselves, using the resources they had and getting the music out there. This hands-on approach was right up my alley and I knew I wanted a piece of the action... and action was exactly what I got when I went to my first 'Homegame' up in Anstruther (and not the naughty kind of action, this was action I had not experienced before). Those few days of being surrounded by these warm, funny, music-loving people who were creating this free, no pressure atmosphere where you could just relax and enjoy the music, changed my life forever. It was all very fresh to me having spent much of my time in London and in bands chasing deals, showcases etc. It made me remember why I was doing music in the first place. At the Green Man Festival I released 'Sea Like Blood', part of the Fence Record's Picket Fence series.

A couple of months later I went back up to Anstruther for the annual Halloween shindig. Not knowing what to expect and arriving late, my friend Fin and I turned up in plain clothes. We quickly regretted this. Through the door we were greeted by 'cock boy' (Mr Lynch painted red in a chicken outfit), KC in a flattering purple velvet number and what looked like a scene from 'The Wicker Man'. This is a night I will never forget; the climax was a killer set from the Archie Bronson Outfit. The next day I played at the Scout Hut in St Andrews with Aidan Smith and HMS Ginafore. I always love playing to Fence crowds, as they are very respectful and attentive. It was a great gig with a great setting. Back in London on November 14th, after discussing it with Kenny and Johnny, I decided to put on the first Fence Collective night in London where I officially released my mini album. More recently I played at the Barbican as part of BBC4's 'Folk Britannia' season with Pictish Trail. I was very honoured to represent the Fence Collective down in London, spreading the good word. It is very exiting and constantly inspiring to be involved with Fence and I look forward to many more good times to come. Bring it on!

Barbarossa x

Barbarossamusic.com

I Don't Know How To Begin: The Pictish Trail's *History of Fence*

Kenny's had this idea that we each write a piece about how we got involved with Fence, and what has happened following our involvement. So, here's my bit ... We all know about the little boy who squandered his remaining school days in bitter regret of the moment he foolishly tried to pass the solo recordings of Graham Coxon as his own (seek Fencezine Vol. 2, Issue #1 if you have forgotten). But what happened next, Johnny?

Well, there I was, freshly graduated from N.D. Catholic High School ("Where the N stands for Nawledge"), out in Fairfield, Connecticut. My four years in the States had witnessed a slight softening of the accent, a lengthening of the customary 'curtains' hairstyle into an altogether more 'post-grunge-grease-ball' look, and somewhat more supple skin (following an onslaught of pimple-treatment experimentation with various supermarket-shelf medications that generally proved ineffective, and were often ditched in favour of some good ol' fashioned 'squeezing', forcefully applied by my sister, Suzy, with her unforgiving finger-nails). Blur's *13*, Pavement's *Wowee Zowee* and The Beta Band's *3 EP's* provided the soundtrack to this, my longest ever summer - final exams had finished in May, and university wasn't due to start until late-September. I had been accepted into St Andrews Uni a few months before my high-school finals, so i was on auto-pilot for a long time - keeping very unruly hours, watching endless reruns of *Mork & Mindy* on late-night Nickelodeon ... you get the idea ...

The guy who ran the local record store in Fairfield told me that he applied for college in Athens, Georgia, because he was an R.E.M. fanatic - and that the student population down there pretty much doubled in his freshman year of 1986. It had been my fascination with The Beta Band and Belle & Sebastian that had spurred a decision to apply for universities back in Scotland (coupled with the fact that US college was just far too expensive to even contemplate for a second) - so when I got accepted into St Andrews my fascination turned to (mild) teen-obsession.

I scoured the net and countless magazines for articles on the Beta's, trying to find some 'nuggets' on St Andrews life - every mention of the place triggering a thousand volts of excitement within me, accompanied by an understandably post-adolescent yearning for instant beard growth. The four members of the band were captured in numerous press shots and videos, running around muddy fields and hills on dark grey days, wearing thick sweaters, wellies, and beards. For a kid of the MTV generation, this was punk rock. The thought of living in Fife, ostensibly the middle of nowhere, and writing mad songs that only *you* knew the meaning to ... it made me mad with anticipation. Realising that you didn't need more than two chords, I started writing my own songs. OK, none of them had any endings, and they were all pretty shit ... but they were songs.

Within a week of arriving in St Andrews i had made a few friends, and set out into the town centre to have a drink. Walking along Bell Street we heard some music, so we popped into it's source - a bar called Aikmans. This was my introduction to King Creosote. I thought "This sounds alright", had a few drinks, and watched for a bit. I popped into the pub maybe a month later - there he was again ... but all the songs seemed different from the previous time. Again, I stuck around for a few drinks, tapped my toes, bobbed my head and headed off. This accidental stumbling upon Kenny's music kept happening - he was always ... just ... there, playing an endless supply of songs - everything sounded different each time i saw him. It was when i saw the *same* band play for nigh-on three hours one night that it really hit me ... where *do* they get all their songs from?

Gradually i started to recognise some of the recurring songs, and also some of the faces that seemed to be at every show. I witnessed live shows from The José, Gummi Bako, Billy Pilgrim, The Abrahams, Pip Dylan and Lone Pigeon, amongst others. I became aware of the Fence name, and even bought a few Fence things from the local shop - which King Creosote and Billy Pilgrim both worked at. I was quite a nervous fellow, so didn't really say much other than the occasional mumbled 'hello'. Having pieced together the Beta Band connections, and sussed the 'brother' thing, and was kind of in awe of it all. The music, and its story, was amazing.

At this time i was running a rather decent indie-night at the Students Union, DJing for 4 hours every fortnight. I started up a band, called The Prince, William Golf Band (yes, i know, i know ... an awful name) with my mate Adam. We did a few gigs, here and there, and went down pretty well ... although it was a

struggle to get rehearsals together. I put on a couple of music events at the Sea Life Centre and some at the Union, and booked 'Fence' to play at them. At the end of my third year, Kenny asked if the Prince Willies would like to play at the next 'Fence Sunday Social' - an all-day matinee-into-evening show, with numerous Fence bands, at (you guessed it) Aikmans. It was our first show for Fence - Uncle Beesly and Cheehi joined in on bass and drums - and i was chuffed to bits. I ran home, put together a demo tape of songs, gave KC a copy, and got drunk while watching everybody else play.

Summer 2002, and i'm in the States again, staying with my folks, spending most of my time indoors, awake until all hours of the morning. They had just moved to Wisconsin, so i was pining the absence of my high school friends from Connecticut, and my friends from uni too. As the new semester wasn't going to start for another two months, i went about recording some songs to keep myself occupied, using a very basic piece of software. They were songs that had been floating around in my head, hummed loudly in the shower, that i never approached the band with ... and i wanted to make them my own.

Earlier that year, my friend Harry had sent me one of his holiday-snaps from a trip he took to the north of Scotland. The picture was of himself, stood in front of a sign saying 'The Pictish Trail' - he always called me 'the pict', on account of my general pot-bellied hairiness. I burned my freshly recorded songs onto a disc, put a bit of artwork on it, stuck on the name 'The Pictish Trail', and sent it off to Kenny to see what he thought. Got an email back a few weeks later saying he liked it, and wanted to do a CD-R run. I said 'Yes, please'.

When i got back to St Andrews, my band-mate Adam had married his internet-love. The band promptly died. I started doing Pictish Trail gigs on my own, and attended as many Fence gigs as possible. By spring 2003, relations with my then-girlfriend turned sour, and in my last month of uni i dumped her, narrowly escaping confinement in her parents basement for the rest of my life. Kenny offered me a job, organising Fence live stuff, so i decided to stay in Fife.

Two and a half years later, and i'm still here - living in Cellardyke, with Kate Canaveral. I think it's fair to say that over this time Fence has changed quite a bit - the size of the Collective has expanded, the recording quality of the output has improved (!), and the profile of the label has magnified considerably in the public eye.

So what *exactly* happened ?

Who's who in the Fence Office? - September 2003

Kenny Anderson:

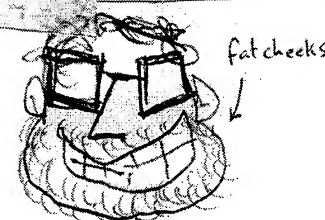
a.k.a. King Creosote - leader of the Fence Collective and all-round boss of Fence Records.

Alan Stewart:

a.k.a. Gummi Bako - crazed baldy-loon, all-round computer-bod for Fence Records.

Johnny Lynch:

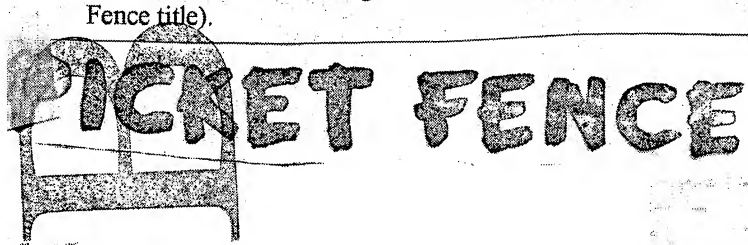
a.k.a. The Pictish Trail - gig-guy, tea-boy, and all-round. Just all-round (possibly due to high biscuit consumption).



A major change took place in September 2003, when the label put out its first 'real' artist titles - Kenny & Beth's *Musakal Boat Rides* by King Creosote, and Pip Dylan's *Of All The Things I Can Eat I'm Always Pleased With A Piece Of Cheese*. The release of these albums marked a move towards creating a greater awareness of Fence as a label. Although *Sampler No.3* and *Let's Get This Ship On The Road* had been fully manufactured titles, distributed nationwide, there hadn't been any great steps made towards actively promoting them. The key changing factor was Laurence Bell, head of Domino Records, with whom Kenny had signed a publishing deal earlier in the year (making sure to involve his two brothers at the same time). An agreement was made which allowed Domino to license Kenny & Beth's... from Fence Records, outside of the UK. Domino's involvement not only took the King Creosote name across Europe and the States, it was also instrumental in facilitating a press team (Hermana) to generate press interest for both Fence albums within the UK. Reviews in national press started to build-up - and by mid-October, Mojo magazine requested a feature on the Collective, travelling all the way up to Anstruther to take some snaps for the Hallowe'en bash in the Ship Tavern.

However, Fence wasn't about to sweep it's homemade CD-R roots under the carpet. At the beginning of the summer, Alan and Kenny had hatched a plan to repackage all future CD-R output from the Collective, using a generic Fence-designed wallet for every release. The 'Picket Fence' was born – half-hour mini-albums by individual artists, that belonged as part of a set of twelve. The original picket fence titles came in a specially printed wallet, with the artists' initials spray-painted on the front, and a customised tracklist taped onto the back. This model allowed for small runs of CD-Rs to be made without losing money – as each one was made to order – which in turn asserted the importance of 'the Collective' over the individual, maintaining the cut'n'paste ethic and grass roots reputation the label had built over the years.

Astonishingly, by the end of 2003 both the A set and B set were complete - 26 brand new titles (including the elusive A13 & B13 pickets, saved for subscribers only!). New names were introduced to the Collective (Shinya Mizuno, Down The Tiny Steps, The Süpergun, Trilemma, etc), and other established Collective members stepped out of the woodwork (MC Quake, OnTheFly, Amino People and Uncle Beesly were among a few of the artists whose first full-release was a Picket Fence title).



In 2004, another new idea churned out of the Fence udder – The Fencezine. This was an in-house publication, issued monthly, and manufactured by hand utilising the photocopier at the local CO-OP, and a plethora of staples. By the end of the year, Fence had received over 50 subscribers – which took hours upon hours of some poor sod hunched over the photocopier to produce.

The year also witnessed the release of *Fence Reunited*, a compilation of tracks from the Collective – a follow-up, of sorts, to 2002's *Let's Get This Ship On The Road*. To celebrate the release of the album, an event called 'The Homegame' was held in Anstruther. It comprised of a Saturday evening and an all-day event on

the Sunday – and played host to as many Fence acts as was possible to fit. It sold about 100 tickets – with folk coming from all over the country to be there.

Also in 2004: Two King Creosote albums were released (*Psalm Clerk* and *SeaGlass*), we played the Greenman Festival again, did a batch of big shows in Sweden with UNPOC, and released all 12 titles of the Picket Fence C-set. It was a good year.

Looking back on it now, 2005 was pretty much the same as 2004 – but everything was just WAAAAY BIGGER.

- King Creosote released another two albums (*Rocket D.I.Y.* and *KC Rules OK*), which went on to sell thousands.
- Fencezine subscriptions doubled – in order to make 2005's Fencezines a lot less hassle, a decision was made to release the magazine quarterly, get it printed by proper printers, and to include an exclusive album with each issue.
- The D-Picket Fence set was released, along with fully-fledged releases from Things In Herds, The Amino People and Deaf Mutes. Plus, Fence unveiled www.thefenceshop.com – and sales went through the roof.
- The Greenman Festival slot was higher up the bill, and there was good Fence presence at a lot of other festivals like Homefires, Loopallu, Summer Sundae, and LLAMA, as well as Fence's own club nights in St Andrews (trailer park), and headlining a full UK tour with Jose Gonzalez.

What else? ... oh yeah
• The Homegame was double the size. That was nice.

So, all in all, 2005 was a pretty good year, too ... in fact – it was a vital year. Without it, I think things would currently be a lot more difficult – particularly for myself. My first year and a half of working for Fence had been voluntary, and I had been receiving Job Seekers Allowance on the New Deal for Musicians over that time, whilst honing my, er, songwriting 'craft'. By the end of 2004, I had been through all the necessary self-employment courses, and was all out of benefits – I had to start earning money. KC signing to Warners meant bigger gigs, and more publicity for Fence – which, combined with increased record sales through the web shop, meant that Fence's income was on the rise. Not crazy money – but enough for me to earn a wage from.

With the spotlight on Fence, there's been a lot more work to do – and my job at Fence has evolved quite a bit. I still sort out gigs, but I also burn a lot of the discs (with help from Sturab!), put together the artwork, manage the webshop, take the phonecalls and emails, write for the Fencezine, do the press releases and mailouts, as well as play in about 3 different Fence acts (not including my own!). It's an incredible job – but exhausting! Now it's February 2006, and I'm about to go on tour with KC again – this time for a full month. I've got two days to sort out a line-up for the Homegame, apply for funding from the Council, and make provisions for the webshop during my absence ... plus, I promised Adem I'd record a song using a cheezy panpipe sound (a bet we'd placed with each other after witnessing Mike Heron's use of said sound at the Folk Britannia gig at the Barbican last week!). So I will bid you adieu just now, dear friends ... but I will say one more thing before I depart ...

At the moment Fence is basking in the glow of a 'folk-revival' – and the success of King Creosote, James Yorkston, The Aliens and KT Tunstall is playing a big part in our perceived success. But don't be fooled into thinking we're selling hundreds of albums every week. We're not. What keeps the machine running are new ideas – some of the ideas are a bit stupid, and some are certainly not cost-effective ... but they are imperative in Fence's survival. A lot of people get into the Fence thing by taking a chance on a record – buying something with no real idea as to what it is going to sound like. In this age of digital downloads, the experience of actually 'experiencing something new' is dying – people aren't taking as much of a chance on music. They are buying individual songs they've seen in an advert or radio play-listed singles. In buying this magazine you've taken a chance – and I urge you to keep doing so. Keep looking for new things all the time.

Right, I'm going to sign off before this gets any cornier.

Muchos love,

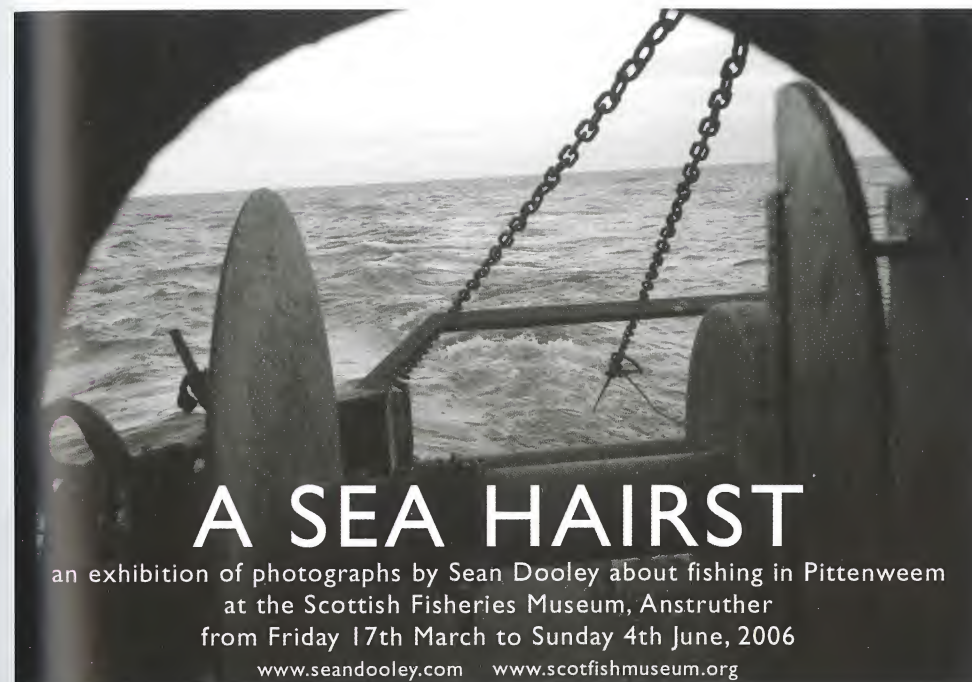
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